
Review of "The Hindus - An Alternative History" (Chapter 10)

Contributed by Chitra Raman
Wednesday, 17 March 2010

The goal of this chapter is to examine the Hindu understanding of ahimsa or non-violence by comparing the personalities of Yudishthira in the Mahabharata and the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. Doniger's arguments present both personalities as being much more ambiguous in their convictions than is widely held: she cites more than one instance to support her claim that they were "hedging," implying that they allowed themselves strategic loopholes in their interpretation of morality. The author's central purpose in this chapter is to highlight the violence towards animals in the Mahabharata, as well as violence among them, and derive metaphors for human relationships from these conflicts. Also novel is Doniger's contention, with no credible basis other than personal bias, that certain narratives about animals are really coded guidelines for the treatment of Pariahs.

"THE HINDUS, AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY"

By

Wendy Doniger

A Review of CHAPTER 10 titled

"VIOLENCE IN THE MAHABHARATA"

by

Chitra Raman

SUMMARY

The goal of this chapter is to examine the Hindu understanding of ahimsa or non-violence by comparing the personalities of Yudishthira in the Mahabharata and the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. Doniger's arguments present both personalities as

being much more ambiguous in their convictions than is widely held: she cites more than one instance to support her claim that they were "hedging," implying that they allowed themselves strategic loopholes in their interpretation of morality. The author's central purpose in this chapter is to highlight the violence towards animals in the Mahabharata, as well as violence among them, and derive metaphors for human relationships from these conflicts. Also novel is Doniger's contention, with no credible basis other than personal bias, that certain narratives about animals are really coded guidelines for the treatment of Pariahs.

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